



When and why Public Administrations should or should not adopt free software?

Flavia Marzano

flavia(dot) marzano (at) gmail (dot) com



***“No man really becomes a fool
until he stops
asking questions.”***

Charles P. Steinmetz

Constraints and Common Rules

Public Administrations (PAs) buying software have to ensure the respect of many different constraints at least from the legal, technical and economical points of view.

Nevertheless PAs can not forget that they are spending **public money for public interest**, so they also have to ensure the respect of some “common” rules; therefore we consider essential to define specific “Guidelines” for software procurement in PAs.



Technology development

The development of technologies can be seen at least from three different points of view:

technical: computer technologies (hardware & software) are more and more evolved and responding to customer requirements and needs

easiness of use: technologies evolution has brought simplification of interfaces and man-machines interaction instruments

economical: strong enhancement of the price / performances ratio

Risks 1 of 2

Technologies are evolving very fast and not always democratically; the risk is that too few suppliers keep the market and so technologies are more an instrument of power than a real tool for progress

Many population groups are weaker for mental, physical, age, gender, income or culture reasons. **For these groups access to technologies is not insured simply by their evolution**



Risks 2_{of 2}

The role of politics is essential in lowering the digital divide and to fill the gap between technologies and citizens giving people the full capacity to control and use new instruments and avoiding the risk of new monopolies.

...driving technologies...

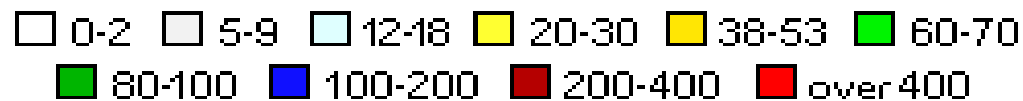
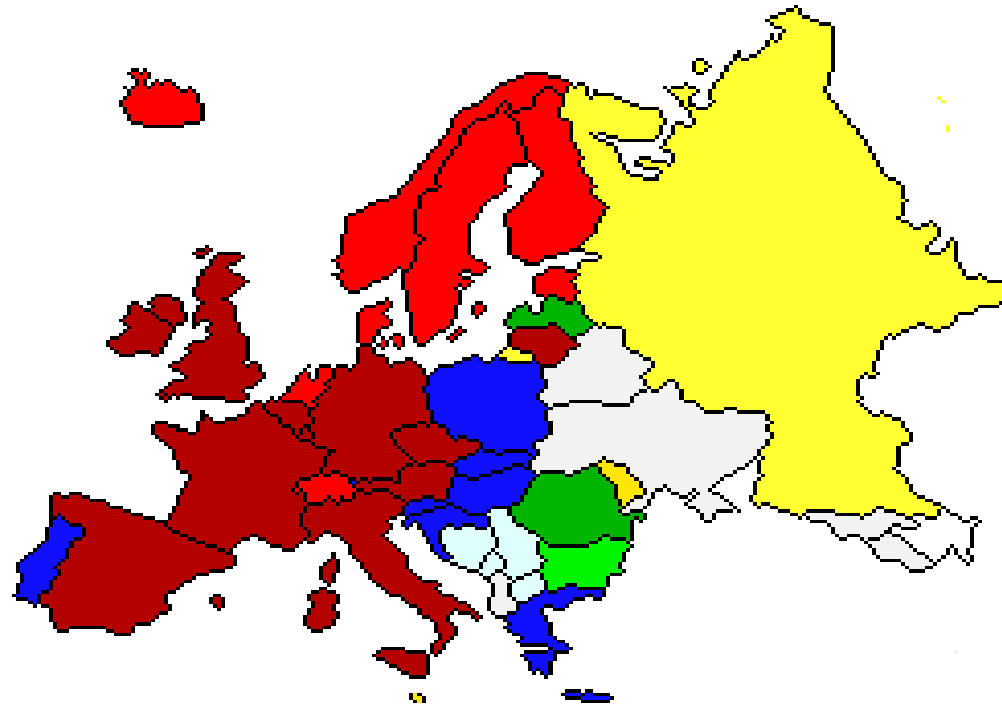


Opportunities 1 of 2

PAs can turn above mentioned risks into opportunities, granting citizens and enterprises the **reduction of discriminating conditions** and making them participate to economical, technological and social evolution processes.

This discrimination is today generated not only by a macroscopic geographical separation (North–South), but is observable at all microscopic levels of the economical and social structure and visible also through apparently “minor” barriers like generational, cultural and gender separation or lack of training process.

Internet hosts per 1000 inhabitants



<http://www.gandalf.it/data/data2.htm>

Opportunities 2 of 2

In this phase PAs and in particular the local PAs have **big duties and big opportunities** to act in this direction



...bridging the digital divide...

USA...

Transparency and Open Government:

“My Administration is **committed** to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government.



We will work **together** to ensure the public trust and establish a system of **transparency, public participation, and collaboration**.

Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government.”

Europe...

Open Source Observatory and Repository

OSOR.EU admits all free,
libre and open source



software, which was funded by public
administrations, that is distributed under
licenses that are recognised by the Free
Software Foundation (FSF) or the Open
Source Initiative (OSI) and code that is
released under the European Union Public
License (EUPL): <http://www.osor.eu>

To do list for PAs 1 of 2 *(Open that Window!)*

PAs, in buying software, **must insure:**

Pluralism, competition and security

Integration with the software already
in use

The “continuity” of data (the possibility
to be read/elaborated also in the
future)

Interoperability and cooperation

Availability of source code at least for
inspection and traceability (even in
case of proprietary code)



To do list for PAs 2 of 2

PAs, in buying software, must:

Be proprietary (aware) of the “structure” of data

Be proprietary of sw custom (this is not true for licences)

Get better price/performance solutions

Get a good price/performance maintenance

Verify the TCO

Buy software based on Open Standards

Be sure to be able to change software supplier

Be sure that the software acquired will not have any
“*backdoors*”



***“The best ideas
are common property”***

Lucio Anneo Seneca

(Cordoba - Spain, 21 may 4 a.C. – Rome - Italy, 65)

In giving informations PAs must

...grant to citizens

Transparency

Privacy

Accessibility (availability of documents and accessibility for disables)

Possibility to read public documents without having to buy any software (nor licence)



How?

Most of the previous requirements can be **easily obtained** by adopting:

Open Standards (OS)

Open Source Software (FLOSS) solutions

...but, in some case, it is essential that **adoption of OS and FLOSS solutions be made compulsory by law** in order to grant that the following requirements be totally satisfied...



Requirements 1 of 2

efficient and easy **interoperability** at European level;
European Interoperability Framework (for pan-european
eGovernment services) v2.0:

<http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=31597>

Have a look of the Chapter 9:

“Be prepared to benefit of Open Source Methods”

Requirements 2 of 2

extended **reusability** of software and solutions
permanent access to data and information
independence from suppliers
verifiability of content and procedures

...political choices...

Going on... 1 of 2

Beyond this minimal and common level of requirements, each Administration will be able to adopt its own policies adding more compulsory rules like, for instance, the following:

PAs buying software developed on their own specifications have to acquire the source code and be proprietary of it;

PAs owning software developed on their own specifications, have to give it for free with the source code and documentation to any other PA who can adapt it to its own needs;



Going on... 2 of 2

Intermediate rank PAs must support lower level Administrations in the migration from proprietary software to FLOSS.

Many Governments and Local PAs have already adopted such policies.



Kosovo... from the past ^{1 of 2}

“Support to e-government initiatives at local level through free and open source software in South East Europe”. Project started in June 2004, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Internet Society of Bulgaria (ISOC-Bulgaria) and implemented by the Internet Society Bulgaria. Initially launched in Bulgaria, the project has already extended to Macedonia and **Kosovo**, and will soon expand to include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro.

The project aims to help municipal governments in South Eastern Europe to better respond to citizens' needs. It is the first e-government project in the region to use Free Open Source Software (FOSS) applications.

...With open source solutions, the city above all wants to **save costs** avoiding paying licences for certain software, increase the level of **security** and raise the level of IT **skills of the employees**.

(http://www.osor.eu/case_studies/balkan-cities-become-e-municipalities-with-open)

Any news on that?

Kosovo... from the past 2 of 2

**“Open source efficacy in development context:
the Kosovo case”**

March 2004 by Engineers Without Borders

(“Efficacia dell'OpenSource nei contesti di sviluppo: il caso Kosovo”

<http://www.diam.unige.it/isf04/risorse/ISFRM-GE04.pdf>)

Any news on that?

Kosovo from yesterday...

Kosovo to Start e-Governance in Four Years (13 May 2008)

Pristina _ Kosovo's Public institutions will be 'digitalised' within four years, officials pledge. "**Kosovo has no time to wait... it should reform the public administration and enable complete governance,**" Arsim Bajrami, the Minister of Public Services said, adding **a fully electronic administration is possible...**

(<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/10123/>)

Any news on that?

Kosovo tomorrow... 1 of 2

Chains or Freedom?



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/loungerie/304196485/>

It depends on you, on all of us!

Politicians: we really need you!

Conclusions

Promoting the FLOSS philosophy PAs facilitates a **better diffusion of technologies and improves the access and participation opportunities for citizens and enterprises.**

In conclusion the main issues for FLOSS in PA are a **bigger independence from software suppliers** and the possibility to **develop local enterprises** while proprietary software implies a strong dependence on big non-European enterprises.



ilgeko.deviantart.com

*“If you have an apple and I have an apple
and we exchange these apples
then you and I will still each have one apple.
But if you have an idea and I have an idea
and we exchange these ideas,
then each of us will have two ideas!”*

(George Bernard Shaw)

...it's a long way, but...
Gutta cavat lapidem
Constant dropping wears
away a stone

See you in a *free* future!

Thank you for your attention

This presentation, in its original parts, is covered by a Creative Commons
Licence: Attribution - Non commercial – Share Alike

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/it/legalcode>

